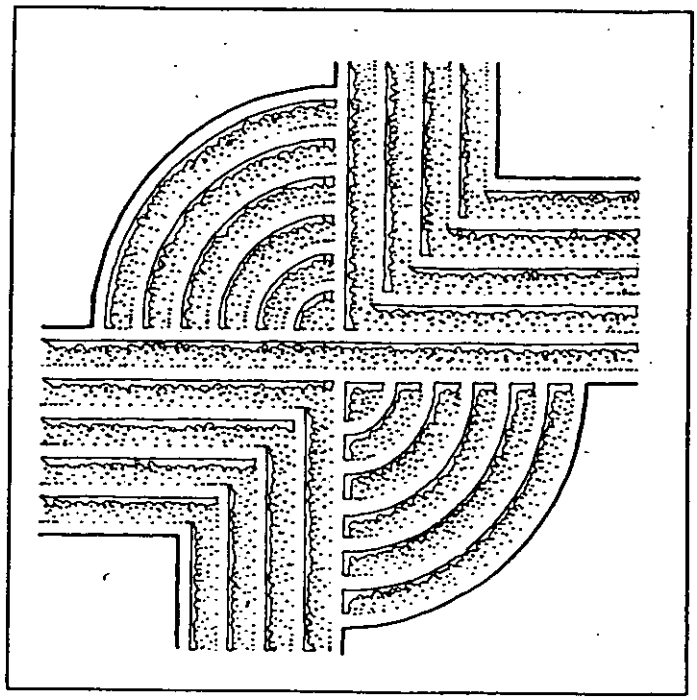
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE RICEFIELDS TRACT, GEORGETOWN COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA



RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 50

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE RICEFIELDS TRACT, GEORGETOWN COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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Chicora Research Contribution 50

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Introduction

This investigation was conducted by Dr. Michael Trinkley of Chicora Foundation, Inc. for Mr. George Taylor, consultant to the developer of the approximately 60 acre Ricefields property (Loblolly Partnership, Pawleys Island). The tract is bordered to the north and northwest by the River Oaks development, to the west by the Waccamaw River ricefields, to the east by a segment of River Road, and to the south by a dike and ditch network (Figure 1). The property tract incorporates the last remaining tract in the vicinity of River Oaks which has not been developed.

Within the tract is a dirt road which runs from the northwest edge at Live Oak Drive southeasterly to River Road. The remainder of the parcel consists of pine second growth forest with a dense understory of herbaceous vegetation. One abandoned field, encompassing about 4.6 acres, is located in the survey area and is currently covered by thick kudzu. The second growth pine gradually is replaced by a mixed pine and hardwood forest along the western edge of the tract as it approaches the Waccamaw River swamp.

The property is under an option by Loblolly Partnership of South Carolina and is anticipated to be developed by the same interest. The area will include approximately 150 townhouse lots and 1.7 miles of paved roads. The proposed work will involve the clearing, grubbing, filling, and grading for the road construction. Construction activities will include the placement of water and sewer lines, underground utilities, and disturbance caused by house construction on individual lots. There are also plans to convert four wetland areas to shallow ponds (two along the eastern edge of the tract, one in the center of the tract, and one at the western edge). These activities will result in considerable land alteration with potential damage to archaeological and historical resources which may exist in the project area.

The proposed project was reviewed by the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and an intensive archaeological survey was recommended (letter to Ms. Lenora Wentworth from Dr. Linda Stine, dated August 13, 1990). Chicora was verbally requested to submit a proposal for such a survey by Ms. Wentworth. A proposal, dated August 6, 1990 was submitted to The Taylor Group and the SHPO for review. The proposal was approved by the SHPO on August 13 and an agreement for the study was signed by The Taylor Group on August 24, 1990.

This study is intended to provide a synopsis of the archaeological survey of the Ricefields tract. The project included two days of archival research, conducted by Ms. Mona Grunden at the South Carolina Historical Society, the Georgetown County RMC, and the Charleston County RMC. In addition, secondary sources were

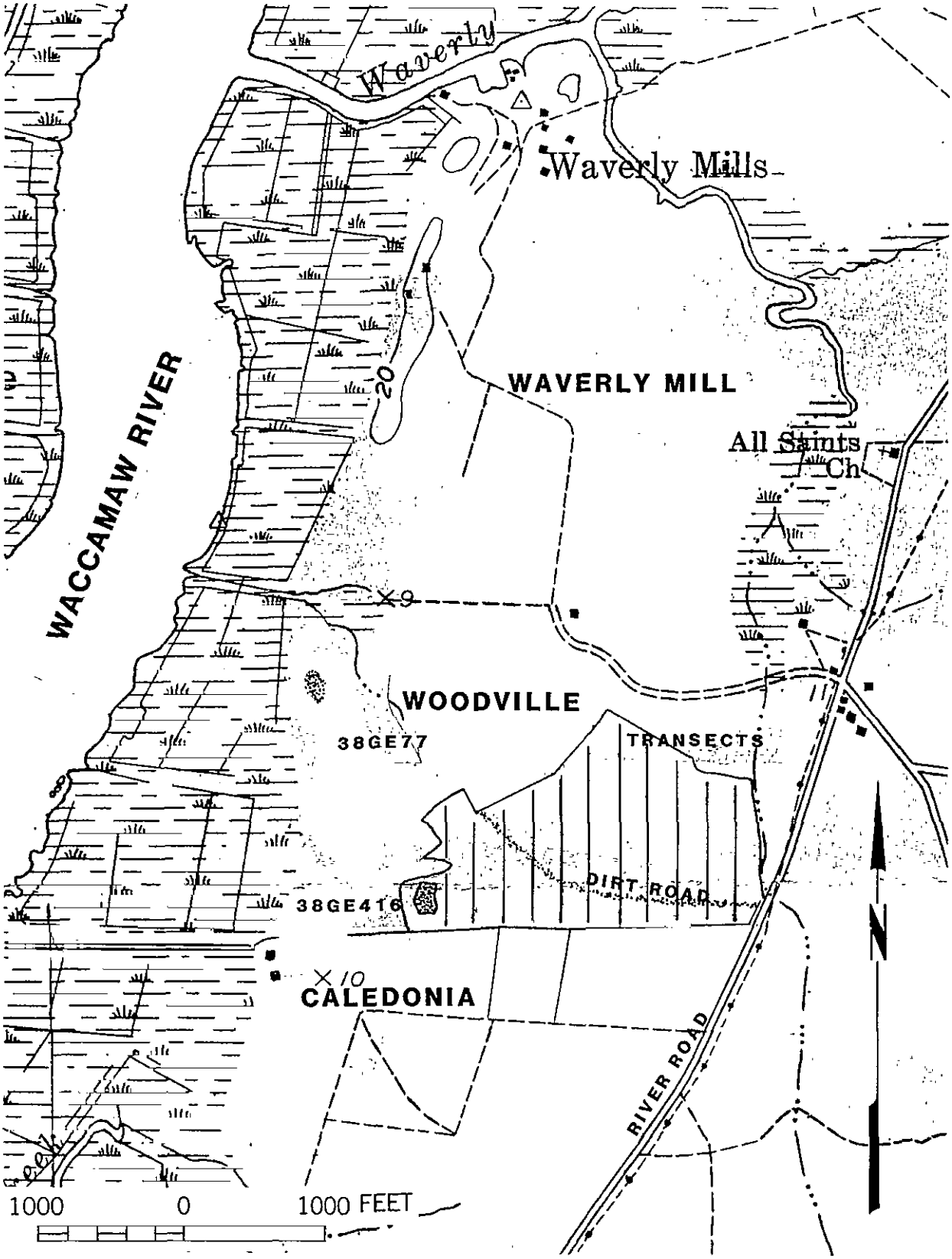

Figure 1. A portion of the Waverly Mills 7.5 USGS showing the project area.

consulted by the author, as well as the statewide archaeological site files held by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. The field investigations were conducted on August 28 and 29 by the author, Ms. Grunden, and Ms. Natalie Adams. This field work involved 48 person hours. Laboratory and report production were conducted at Chicora's laboratories in Columbia, South Carolina on August 31, 1990.

Arrangements are being made to curate the collections from these investigations at The Charleston Museum, although no Accession Number has yet been assigned. Cataloging will be conducted to the facilities standards at the completion of the island-wide survey. All field records will be provided to the institution on pH neutral, alkaline buffered paper and the photographic materials will be processed to archival permanence.

Effective Environment

Georgetown County is situated in the northern lower coastal plain of South Carolina and is bounded on the east by about 37 miles of irregular Atlantic Ocean shoreline (including marsh and barrier islands such as Pawleys and Litchfield). The mainland topography consists of subtle undulations in the landscape characteristic of ridge and bay topography of beach ridge plains. Elevations in the county range from sea level to about 75 feet mean sea level (MSL) (Mathews et al. 1980:132).

The County is drained by five significant river systems, four of which (the Waccamaw, Black, Pee Dee, and Santee rivers) have significant freshwater discharge and only one of which (the Sampit River) is dominated by tidal action. Because of the low topography, however, many broad, low gradient interior drains (such as is found at the Ricefields tract) are present as either extensions of tidal streams and rivers or flooded bays and swales. There are many diverse wetland communities influenced by either the freshwater drainage (dominant in the study area) or tidal flows. Upland vegetation in the County is primarily pine or mixed hardwood and pine. The study tract is primarily second growth pine with a dense understory of herbaceous plants. Large areas of Georgetown County are in forest, with only 6.7% of the acreage being cultivated and 4.2% being urbanized (Mathews et al. 1980:132).

The geology of the county is characteristic of the coastal plain, with unconsolidated, water-laid beds of sands and clays overlying thick beds of soft marl. The Ricefields tract is characterized by two soil series: Yauhannah loamy fine sands, which are moderately well drained and are found on the eastern half and western quarter of the tract, and Yemassee loamy fine sands which are considered somewhat poorly drained and are found slightly inland from the Waccamaw swamp (Stuckey 1982).

The survey tract is characterized by elevations ranging from

about 8 to 12 feet MSL. There is a gradual slope toward a slough on the eastern edge of the tract (adjacent to River Road), a slope toward the toe of a slough along the northern edge of the tract (going into the River Oaks development area), and the slope toward the Waccamaw River swamp along the western edge of the property. At the southern boundary is a dike (standing a maximum of about 4 feet above the surrounding terrain) and ditch system. Similar, although smaller, dikes and ditches are found within the tract, almost certainly for agricultural drainage purposes.

Background Research

Several previous published archaeological studies are available for the Georgetown area to provide background, including Drucker's (1980) work at Brookgreen Gardens, Trinkley's (1987) study of Willbrook, Turkey Hill and Oatland plantations, and Michie's (1987) examination of Richmond Hill and Wachesaw. Prehistoric research in the area includes that at Minim Island by Drucker and Jackson (1984) and Espenshade and Brockington (1989), and research at Wachesaw by Trinkley et al. (1983).

Surprisingly little published archaeology has been conducted in this area, although the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology site files reveal a number of relatively small, shell and nonshell middens found almost exclusively adjacent to a creek or swamp environment. Few sites are found in the interior, away from marsh or freshwater habitats. Most sites, based on the previous studies, are found on excessively to well drained soils, although a few are consistently found in areas which are poorly drained (which suggests that factors other than drainage may occasionally have determined aboriginal settlement locations). Work in the Willbrook area also suggests that sites will most commonly be found on major sand ridge elevations overlooking the wetland habitats.

Work by South and Hartley (1980) suggests that major historic site complexes will be found on high ground adjacent to a deep water access. Plantation main houses tend to be located on the highest and best drained soils, while slave settlements may be found in intermediate or even poorly drained areas. Both settlement types, however, tend to be in close proximity to the ricefields. Extractive or milling sites will be located near necessary raw materials and where the products can be easily transported in and out. Healthful conditions and drainage are not usually significant considerations.

Based on these previous studies and the presented data on the soils and drainage typical of the survey area, the Ricefields tract tends to have a relatively low probability of prehistoric archaeological remains. The soils are only moderately well drained and there are no major sand ridges providing significant elevation overlooking inland sloughs or wetlands.

The potential for historic remains is somewhat more difficult to gauge. The engineering survey of the tract did reveal the presence of a cemetery at the western edge of the site, bordering the Waccamaw swamp. Generally, Black cemetery sites originated in the antebellum, although they appear to be spatially distinct from the slave settlements. There is no deep water access to any portion of the Ricefields tract, which suggests a lower probability for plantation activities such as storage and processing. There are, however, questions remaining regarding the historic settlement pattern in this particular area.

In 1976 Dr. Donald Sutherland, SHPO Archaeologist, recorded a multicomponent site north of the Ricefields tract on property belong to Rossdhu Ventures of Pawleys Island. The site was situated 500 feet along the edge of the Waccamaw River swamp (previously rice fields). The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century historic component consisted of possible structural remains, ceramics (including colono ware, creamware, pearlware, and possibly whiteware), and wine bottle fragments. The site was apparently being impacted by a development permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers (Permit P/N 75-3A-337) and Sutherland's comment was

> complete survey and testing as soon as possible - make proposal to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers . . . another project where a survey needed. Possible mitigation to follow" (38GE77, notes on file, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology).

Unfortunately, it does not appear that any additional work was conducted.

The historic research conducted for this project emphasized nineteenth and early twentieth century documents, and incorporated some minimal secondary sources. Although this historic synopsis is far from complete, it is sufficient to document historic land use and provides a fairly complete chain of title for the tract. Additional work, such as examination of the R.F.W. Allston Papers (housed as microfiche at the South Carolina Historical Society), was not undertaken at this time.

The Ricefields tract is situated north of the original Hobcaw Barony discussed by H.A.M. Smith (1988). The earliest identified record of ownership is that of Joseph Waites Allston, who was the owner of Waverly Plantation (of which the Ricefields tract was original a part) (Easterby 1945:158; Rogers 1970:263). When Allston died in 1834, this uncle, R.F.W. Allston assumed management of the plantation in trust for Joseph Waites Allston's two sons, Joseph Blyth and William Allan. In 1857 Waverly Plantation was split into two parts, with Joseph Blyth Allston receiving the plantation house, rice fields, and rice mill. William Allan Allston received the lower portion of Waverly known as the pine lands and which became known as Woodville (Lachicotte 1955:30-36; Rogers 1970:263).

R.F.W. Allston made Waverly a very prosperous plantation and although Woodville was described as the pine lands, it is clear from the 1860 agricultural census that the plantation was successful. In fact, Joyner observes that:

> Woodville, with its 105 cultivated acres, was the smallest plantation in All Saints Parish, but it had the highest yield of rice per acre. Its 151 slaves raised over half a million pounds of rice each year. The 184 slaves at Waverly raised 450,000 pounds [on 370 cultivated acres] (Joyner 1984:22).

Woodville, in 1860, is reported to contain 2105 acres and it seems likely that the bulk of the 2000 acres of unimproved land represents the "pine lands."

The exact fate of Woodville Plantation during the Civil War is not currently known, but it is clear that it was retained or redeemed by William Allan Allston. In January 1873 the tract was sold in a Sheriff's sale as the result of a Court of Common Pleas Judgement, dated February 27, 1869 against Allston in the sum of $500.00 (Georgetown County RMC Deed Book D, page 524). The deed, issued to Charles Petigrue Allston, does not specify the acreage sold, although it does indicate that a total of 203 acres (65 acres of rice land and 138 acres of upland), known as the "Homestead," are excluded from the sale. The exact location of the Homestead is not specified, although site 38GE77 appears to be an excellent candidate for the main plantation settlement. It is probable, based on later deeds, that the tract sold was approximately 320 acres. This suggests that by 1873 William Allan Allston had already sold off a large portion of Woodville, probably in efforts to prevent the financial ruin which eventually occurred.

In 1877 Charles Petigrue Allston sold this portion of Woodville to Ralph Nesbit, who also owned Caledonia Plantation to the south (Georgetown RMC Deed Book F, page 12). This deed specifies that the tract is the same as purchased from the Sheriff and included 432 acres of rice land and uplands. However, the deed species that the sale does not include land cut into parcels and sold by Allston as shown on a December 7, 1874 plat. Unfortunately, this plat could not be located and the exact acreage excluded is not specified.

Nesbit held the property until September 1923 when it was sold to Harry Marlow. Curiously, although no other transactions could be identified, the tract was recorded as containing only 125 acres (Georgetown RMC Deed Book W-1, page 287). It is possible that Charles Petigrue Allston had sold off a considerable portion of the Woodville tract to freedmen as William Allen Allston before him. Marlow held the property for a little more than a year before selling it to Aline Lloyd Lachicotte (Georgetown County RMC, Deed Book B-2, page 250). This deep specifies that the tract is still

125 acres. The boundary descriptions do not assist in relating the tract to earlier conveyances, although the southeastern boundary is described as the "Parkersville tract, formerly part of Woodville." Parkersville is a small Black community situated in the center of the Waccamaw Neck. This suggests that the original Woodville Plantation ran from the Waccamaw to the Atlantic, typical of many plantations during the early nineteenth century, and that William Allan Allston sold off those less profitable, interior tracts (such as Parkersville) first. Parkersville appears to be a kin-based Black community which formed shortly after the Civil War.

In 1939 Lachicotte sold the Woodville tract to George Trask and at this time it was listed as containing 320 acres (Georgetown RMC Deed Book Z-2, page 520). A plat of the tract, dated September 1939 (Figure 2) shows the plantation in the early twentieth century. There are a number of tenant houses clustered in the northeast quadrant of the property and Waverly and Caledonia plantations are shown for the northern and southern boundaries respectively. Both boundaries are clearly demarcated by ditch and dike features.

The 1942 Corps of Engineers 7.5 minute series topographic map shows the area essentially the same as the 1939 plat, with several large fields and dike systems to the north and south. The tenant houses are not shown, although the one "residence" shown on the 1939 plat is present on the topographic map.

In August 1955 Trask sold the tract to Thomas King Martin. Woodville is still listed as 320 acres, excluding 5 acres sold to Joe Ivey (Georgetown County RMC Deed Book 13, page 142 and Deed Book N-3, page 558). In 1970 Martin sold a one-half interest to James Martin (Georgetown County RMC Deed Book 93, page 760). The property was conveyed to Michael Hinds et al. (River Oaks) in 1975 (Georgetown County RMC Deed Book 144, page 85).

While no period plats were identified by this historic research, it did reveal information on basic ownership and land use patterns during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Woodville, as a distinct entity, did not exist prior to 1857 when William Allan Allston took over operation of the southern portion of Waverly Plantation from his uncle, R.F.W. Allston. This suggests that the bulk of improvements made on Woodville, totalling about 2105 acres, occurred during the last decade before the Civil War. Later historic references indicate that there was a main plantation settlement on Woodville, and there is circumstantial evidence that it is at least partially recorded as 38GE77.

After the Civil War it appears likely that several owners, including William Allan Allston, began selling tracts to freedmen, with the most obvious evidence for this practice being the creation of Parkersville, a Black community. By the early twentieth century Woodville Plantation had been reduced to about 320 acres and was

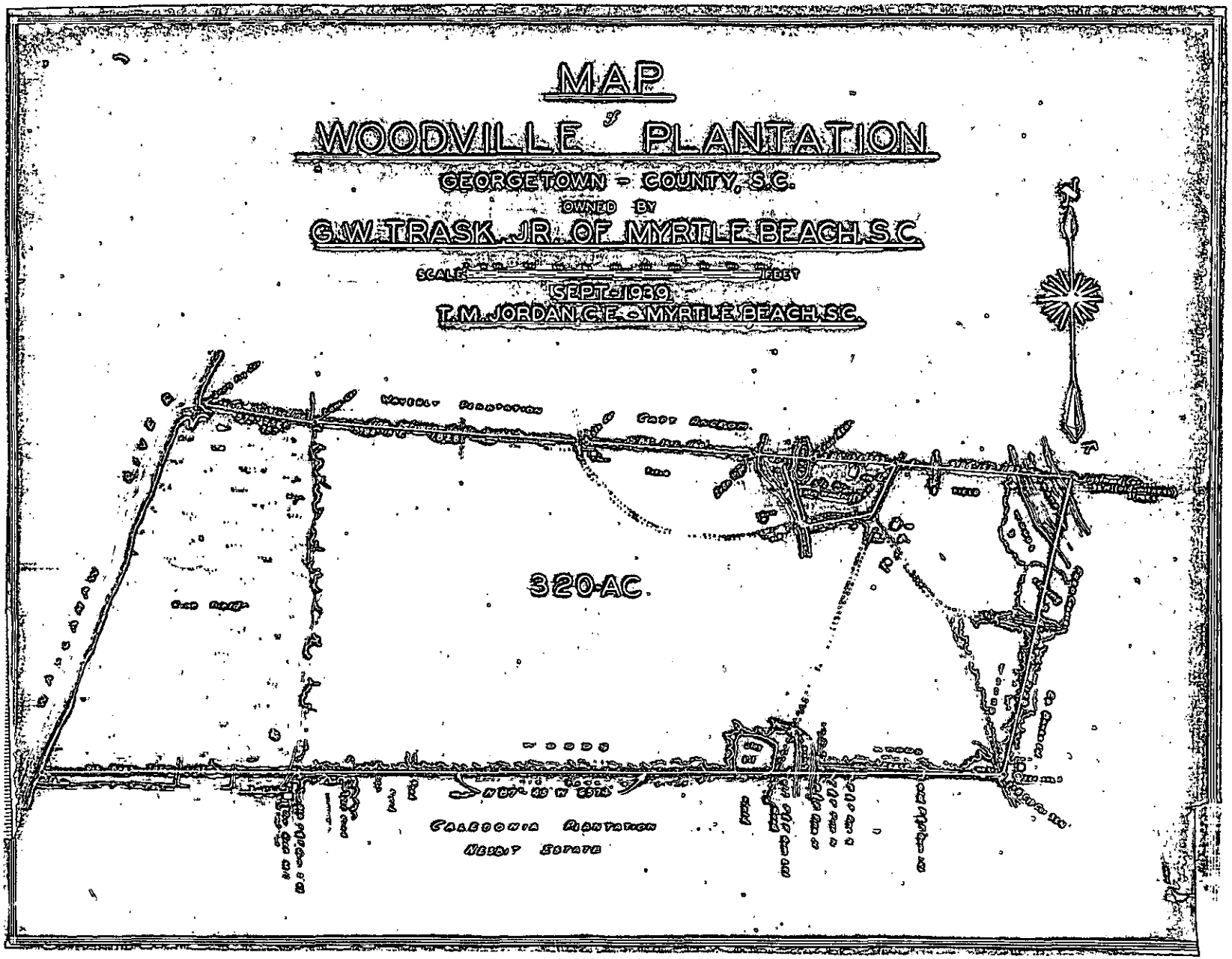

Figure 2. 1930 plat of Woodville Plantation.

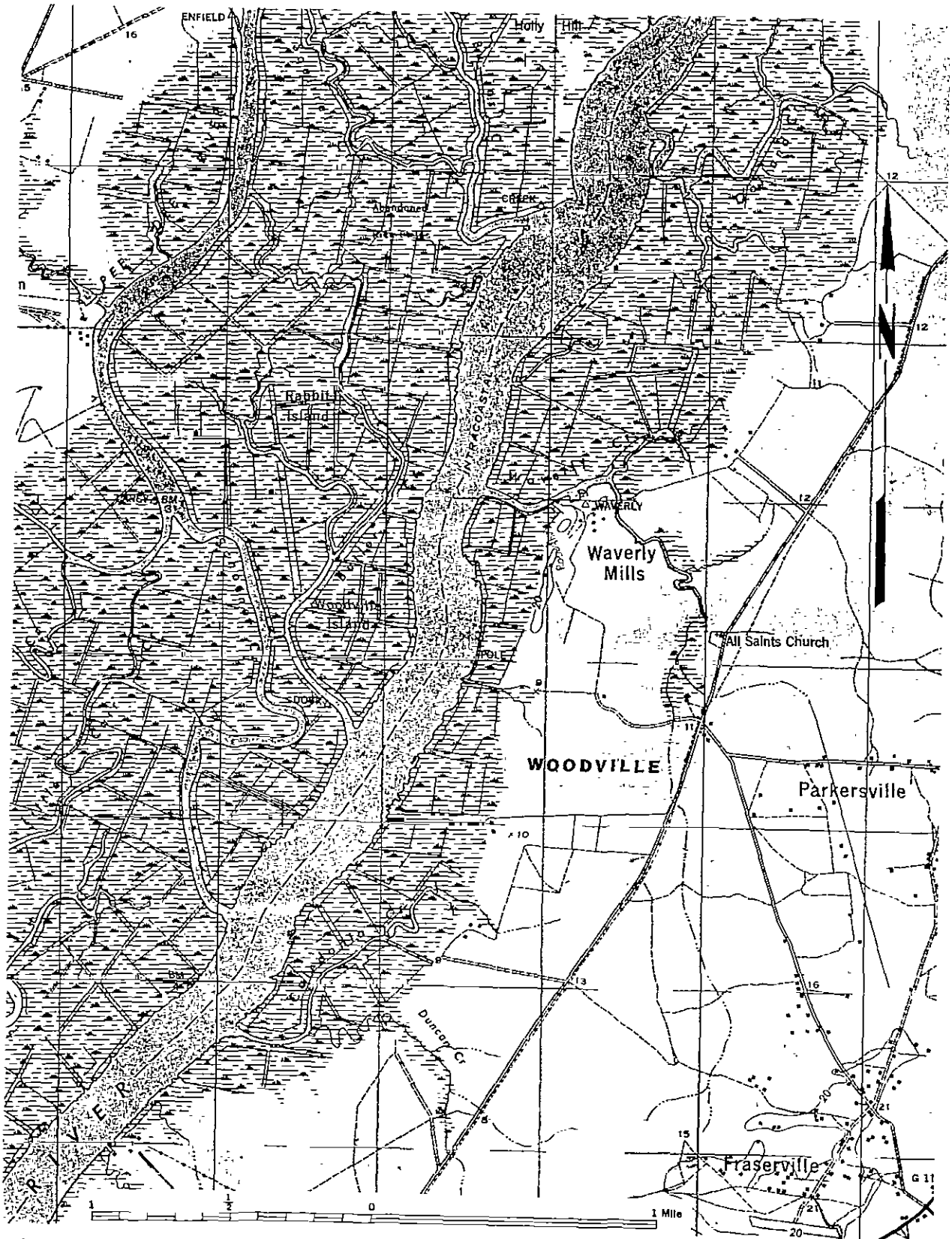

Figure 3. 1942 Corps of Engineers topographic survey of the project area.

being operated by tenant farmers.

This historic research failed to reveal any clear evidence of settlement or occupation in the portion of Woodville which is today called Ricefields. It is clear, however, that the vast bulk of Woodville Plantation has been thoroughly developed and whatever archaeological remains were once present have been destroyed.

Field Methods

The initially proposed field techniques (discussed in Chicora's proposal submitted to the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office) involved the placement of shovel tests at 100 foot intervals along transects at 100 foot intervals through the study areas which exhibited well drained soils. In those areas with poorly drained soils the transects would be placed at 200 foot intervals and tests would be excavated every 200 feet. All soil would be screened through 1/4-inch mesh, with each test numbered sequentially by transect. Each shovel test would measure about 1 foot square and would normally be taken to a depth of at least 1 foot. All cultural remains would be collected, except for shell, mortar, and brick, which would be qualitatively noted in the field and discarded. Notes would be maintained for profiles at any sites encountered.

If evidence of an archaeological site was identified, the testing interval would be decreased to 50 feet in order to more accurately establish boundaries. At all sites Chicora would establish site boundaries, collect sufficient information to complete or revise site forms, and would assess and justify site eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. This emphasis on shovel testing is required by the tract's extensive woods coverage, which was anticipated to severely restrict surface visibility.

After completion of the first transect at the eastern edge of the property, it was discovered that the soils, while classified as moderately well drained, tended to be low and relatively poorly drained. In addition, the tract was heavily vegetated with second growth pine and a very thick understory which hampered investigations. As a result, a decision was made to increase the spacing between transects from 100 to 200 feet, while retaining tests at 100 feet intervals along the transects. As a result of these changes, a total of 11 transects were placed north-south through the tract, with a total of 111 shovel tests excavated and screened (Transects 9, 10, and 11 were in areas of very poorly drained soil and tests along these transects were placed at 20 foot intervals).

In addition to the examination of the tract for previously unrecorded sites, investigations were also conducted at the cemetery reported from the site by surveyors from Engineering and

Technical Services of Surfside Beach, South Carolina. The goal of research in this area was to identify graves, determine the boundaries of the cemetery, record information specific to the cemetery, and assess its eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Work in the cemetery was accomplished by walking closely spaced transects (ca. 10 to 20 feet) through the area and flagging sunken grave areas, markers, and grave goods. Each identified grave was numbered and these flags were left in the field for temporary identification purposes. Originally Chicora intended to prepare a map of the cemetery, identifying the various grave concentrations. Initial investigations, however, proved that this approach would not be possible based on the available time and the degree of vegetation and downed timber still remaining from Hurricane Hugo. Significant features were photographed in both b/w and color and gravestone inscriptions were transcribed.

Laboratory Analysis

The cleaning and analysis of artifacts would be conducted at the Chicora Foundation laboratories in Columbia. As previously discussed, it is anticipated that these materials will be cataloged and accessioned for curation at The Charleston Museum, the closest regional repository. Site forms have been filed with the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, with copies provided to the State Historic Preservation Office. Field notes and photographic materials have been prepared for curation using archival standards and will be transferred to The Charleston Museum as soon as the project is complete.

Analysis of the collections would follow professionally accepted standards with a level of intensity suitable to the quantity and quality of the remains.

Results

The shovel testing failed to identify any sites on the Ricefields tract. While this is very unusual for the Georgetown County Waccamaw Neck region, the absence of prehistoric sites is explained by the poorly drained soils and low topography. The absence of historic settlement (excepting the cemetery discussed below) is explained by the tract's location relative to the boundaries of Woodville Plantation. It appears likely that the main settlement was located to the north of Ricefields. Slave settlements are frequently found in areas immediately adjacent to the rice fields. There is only a very limited such area at Ricefields and it is occupied by the cemetery.

The cemetery was assigned site number 38GE416 by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology on August 31, 1990. This site is a Black cemetery clearly indicating use in the early twentieth century and probably dating to at least the late antebellum period. A total of 78 identifiable graves were located

during these investigations. Six of these graves are marked in some manner: two by marble stones, one by a sandstone marker, one by a heartwood pine post, and two iron posts (one of which appears to be bedstead post). One stone (grave 28) reads "CHARLIE YOUNG/FEB 9 1843/SEPT 26 1913/AT REST," while the other (grave 30) reads "NORAH YOUNG/SEPT. 20, 1851/AUG. 19, 1919/Gone, but not forgotten." The other markers provide no information.

Grave goods are rather scarce, but include one fragment of a whiteware decalcomania bowl (MCD 1926), two metal buckets, and what is probably a Great Heart Cockle (Dinocardium robustum robustum) shell. Also found in the cemetery is an example of a domesticated house plant (Dracaena marginata).

Previous research on Black cemeteries has emphasized the association of grave foods with the burial, in addition to the varied grave marking practice. The suggestion has been made that both are African retentions. More recent work has also examined the burial hardware as an indication of status, wealth, and date of burial, and has focused on the forensic study of the skeletal remains to yield information on demography, diet, and disease patterns of the population. Cemeteries, such as 38GE416, have the potential to yield significant anthropological data.

Archaeologists first became aware of Black mortuary patterns through the work of John Combes (1972) on the South Carolina coast. That work was largely based on previous anthropological or folklore studies such as Parsons (1923:214), Michael (1943), Glave (1891), Georgia Writers' Project (1940), and Puckett (1926:103-107). More recent discussions include those by Fenn (1985), Nichols (1989), Thompson (1983), and Vlatch (1978). These studies describe the Black practice of placing items on graves and attribute the practice to African beliefs. Various forms of grave decoration and marking are also described. Both of these practices have been observed at the Woodville Cemetery.

Recent work such as that by Trinkley and Hacker-Norton (1984), Rose (1984), and Garrow et al. (1985) has emphasized the study of coffin hardware and osteological remains to make major contributions to our knowledge of Black lifeways. These studies, undertaken when the cemetery is to be relocated, area a necessary adjunct to the formal and legal routine of relocation as specified by South Carolina law. Rathbun observes:

> cemetery data are extremely important above and beyond the usual categories associated with distinctive persons, design features, and association with historic events. This narrow definition of historic importance fails to recognize that human remains provide data of considerable historic importance. Not only are many segments of the population omitted from typical historical sources, but the skeletal remains provide empirical evidence directly

> relevant to broad historical issues in health, nutrition and social customs. The biological history of our nation has received insufficient attention . . . . Even if some of the information inferred from bioarchaeological analysis is available from other sources, validity and accuracy of other records can be evaluated through comparison with the physical evidence (Rathbun 1985:208).

Consequently, site 38GE416 is recommended as eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The boundaries established for the cemetery by Engineering and Technical Services, Inc. represent the minimal extent of the site (approximately 250 feet north-south and 150 feet east-west). During these investigations, identifiable graves were found immediately adjacent to the established boundaries. To provide and adequate buffer, these boundaries sound be extended 50 feet to the east and south. The current boundaries to the north and west correlate with the steep slopes of the wetland areas and are appropriate.

Summary and Recommendations

As a result of the intensive archaeological survey of the Ricefields tract one site, the Woodville Cemetery (38GE416) was identified. This site is recommended as eligible for inclusion on the National Register.

Green spacing is recognized as an appropriate, and often cost-effective mitigation measure for archaeological site conservation, especially for site such as 38GE416. Such green spacing, however, must ensure the permanent protection and integrity of the archaeological data. Seven recommendations are offered if green spacing is to be considered. These provisions, however, are subject to the review and approval of the State Historic Preservation Office.

1. The site area must to be blocked out in the field with a buffer sufficient to ensure complete protection of the remains. In the case of 38GE416 boundaries of 400 by 20 feet are appropriate.

2. The area must be cleared, by hand. No heavy equipment may be used and all cut vegetation must be removed from the site area. Special care must be taken to avoid damaging the identified grave markers, grave goods, and the ornamental plant(s).

3. The area must continue to be clearly defined during all phases of construction. No equipment will be allowed in this area, or be allowed to use the area as a turn-around. The area will not be used to stockpile supplies or be otherwise disturbed. All personnel, including contractor's personnel, should be strictly forbidden from

entering the area.

4. Any landscaping in the area must be conducted by land and ground disturbance must be limited to the upper 0.2 foot of soil. No utilities, including sprinkler lines or shallow electrical cables will be placed through the area.

5. Loblolly Partnership must develop a historic easement or protective covenant protecting the area set aside in green spacing and this protection must be in perpetuity.

6. Appropriate security must be provided to ensure that no one digs or otherwise disturbs the site.

7. Provisions must be made to ensure access to the site by family members and those wishing to continue using the cemetery.

In addition, several of the grave markers require immediate attention to prevent their permanent loss. The stone markers at the cemetery are in good condition and evidence very little weathering. They may remain untreated. The two iron markers evidence moderate corrosion, although the underlying metal appears sound. They, however, should be cleaned and receive appropriate conservation treatments. Their are a number of coatings which may be applied to the metal which will ensure their long term preservation in the cemetery. The wood marker, while of heart pine, does have a very finite lifespan and should receive conservation treatments. All markers should be precisely located before removal for treatment and should be replaced in their appropriate positions after treatment is completed. With the approval of the SHPO, Chicora will be happy to provide Loblolly Partnership with assistance in this process.

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